

The journey of a 'Drama Queen'

Leslie Scatchard's show brings together her passion for life and theater

By COLLEEN RUSTAD

FOR THE ARGUS-COURIER

Leslie Scatchard believes in following your heart. That is how she has lived her life. It's the advice she gives her students and it's the message that she hopes to communicate in her one woman show, "The Drama Queen," premiering in Petaluma at Sonoma Valley Portworks on Feb. 9.

Scatchard, who says she has been performing "forever," listened to her heart when she chose to major in drama at Cal Poly rather than follow the advice from her family and friends to pursue a more practical field of study.

"All these things stemmed from that one decision," she says. "All that followed – and some pretty crazy things happened along the way – on the journey I've taken is what the show is about."

When her theater career "didn't catch on fire," Scatchard got a teaching credential and went on to teach public school for 12 years. Throughout her career as a teacher, Scatchard has woven her love of theater and performing into her professional life.

"In my fifth grade class, I always had the kids up



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Leslie Scatchard rehearses a scene from "Drama Queen," a one-woman show she has created and will be performing Feb. 9 and May 25 downtown at Sonoma Valley Portworks.

and performing," she says.

For the past 14 years, she has supervised home schooled students. Not being in the classroom everyday gives her the freedom to direct children's theater while continuing her teaching career. She ran her own Greeley Kids' Theatre Company in the Sierra foothills and since moving to Petaluma seven years ago, she has directed children's theater through the Parks and Recreation Department and charter

schools. She co-founded Clear Heart Gallery and is an active member of Petaluma Readers Theatre.

Scatchard says that the idea of doing a one-woman show percolated in her mind for about 10 years. Although she was intrigued by the format of the personal narrative, she wasn't sure how she could go about it.

She started to build material for a show through her performances in Petaluma's West Side Stories. In these "story slams,"

people tell five-minute true stories centered on a theme. In the two years that Scatchard has been a regular performer, she developed 20 stories.

But it was an unexpected opportunity a year ago that moved the idea forward for her. While in New York City, Scatchard went to The Moth, the storytelling organization that inspired Petaluma's West Side Stories. Scatchard, like many hopeful story-

tellers put her name in a hat, hoping to be one of the 10 to be picked. When her name was pulled, Scatchard says it was nothing less than thrilling.

"Getting on that stage in front of 350 people and getting such a good response was one of the highlights of my life and gave me the confidence to think, 'I can do this.'"

The material in "The Drama Queen" is about half new material and half stories that Scatchard has perfected in her performances at West Side Stories. She tells the funny, poignant, and sometimes embarrassing stories of her life starting with sixth grade, through college, teaching, and the last story is her "dream of a lifetime" experience at The Moth.

Scatchard says that thinking of your life as stories can be very therapeutic and gives a person new insights. "Of all the kinds of performing I've ever done, I've found that this is the one that suits me perfectly."

There is no doubt that the community is enthusiastic about seeing Scatchard's new show because the February performance is already sold out. However, Scatchard will perform the show again on May 25 with the possibility of a third show on May 26. The May show will mark the opening of the new Clear Heart Gallery, property that Scatchard is in the process of remodeling into an intimate performing arts venue.

Tickets for the May 25 performance can be purchased at www.brownpapertickets.com/event318571.

(Contact Colleen Rustad at argus@arguscourier.com.)

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